A

BROOM

FOR THE

CONVENTICLE:

OR,

The Arguments for Village Preaching

EXAMINED, AND FAIRLY DISCUSSED;

MORE PARTICULARLY

OBVIATING THE UNFOUNDED ASSERTIONS

OF

MR. KINGSBURY, OF SOUTHAMPTON,

AND

MR. CLIFT, OF CHIPPENHAM.

WITH

OBSERVATIONS

ON

THE VARIOUS REPLIES TO

Mr. H. W.'s LETTER *to the* BISHOP *of* SALISBURY,

And the other Publications on this Subject.

BY THE REV. JOHN MALHAM,

Author of Remarks on Mr. W.'s Letter, &c. &c.

"The Chine and the Gammon had been preached away, and the good things of life could no longer be procured under the humble, but heretofore hospitable, roof. From that period, interference with the province of the regular Minister ceased *to be absolutely necessary*."——SEE PAGE 37.

Salisbury:

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A BROOM, &c.

THE venerable Biſhop of Sarum's Charge to his Clergy, in the Summer of 1798, has been made the ſubject of alarm and conſternation to various deſcriptions and bodies of Diſſenters. From the ſerious intereſt which has been taken reſpectively by perſons of the moſt oppoſite ſentiments and opinions; its importance to the cauſe of Chriſtianity, it is fairly to be inferred, is great and eſſential.

In an early part of the month of September, a Letter was addreſſed to his Lordſhip, by a Gentleman of Saliſbury, ſigned H. W., containing animadverſions on certain parts of the paſtoral direction. From the initials of the name

it was ſoon attributed to Mr. Henry Wanſey, an inhabitant of the city, who has ſince ſufficiently avowed and acknowledged himſelf as the Author. Several Anſwers were ſhortly brought forward; the nature of which I propoſe, as an introduction to the ſubject of theſe pages, briefly and reſpectively to relate.

A pamphlet, entitled, "Remarks on a Letter to the Biſhop of Saliſbury, by a Country Curate," led the van of the defending party, and appeared in a week from the publication of the Letter. Its modeſty has been univerſally admitted, and the Author's obſervations remain uncontradicted. It contains a Poſtſcript, in which a few ſmart expreſſions are introduced, that were underſtood to be productive of much chagrin and uneaſineſs to Mr. H. W.'s friends. The concluding irony, from the calmneſs and moderation of the preceding pages, was not immediately underſtood by every reader; but it ſoon produced the deſigned effect, and the humour of the cloſing expreſſions was univerſally admired. The candid ſpirit of the Remarks gave pleaſure to moſt of the readers; and all were ſatisfied of their truth and propriety.

Another publication, under the title of "Stric-

"Strictures on a Letter to the Biſhop of Saliſbury, by a Critic," ſoon after followed. Its obvious deſign was to expoſe the imperfections of Mr. W.'s language, with the deſign of demonſtrating how little he was qualified for the taſk he had engaged in. Though it principally detected the diction, it did not, as ſome of HIS friends have aſſerted, leave the ſubſtance untouched; ſince it clearly proved, that many of his paragraphs are wholly unappropriate to the purpoſes for which they are advanced. That his hiſtory is as futile, as his grammar is erroneous, is from hence moſt clearly and determinately manifeſt.

From the ſame preſs as the two preceding, a third publication ſpeedily iſſued. Its title was as humourous, as its execution was maſterly. Under the proverbial phraſe of "A Rowland for an Oliver, by G. W." its Author has ſupplied as high ſeaſoned a diſh, as the city of Sarum has for a long time been favoured with. I will not deprive my Readers of the pleaſure of peruſing it, by attempting an epitome. The concluding application of "*Ne ſutor ultra crepidam*, ſtick to the ſpinning Jenny," muſt be

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allowed to be peculiarly happy. Every reader ſhould know that Mr. Wanſey is a clothier.

When the three firſt Anſwers had made their appearance, the Saliſbury Journal announced a publication under the following title: "An Apology for Village Preachers, by W. Kingſbury, M.A." In a fortnight afterwards it made its appearance. A ſmall pamphlet on the ſame ſubject was alſo publiſhed on the ſame day that the other was only propoſed. Its title was ſomewhat novel and curious. It purports to be "An Incidental Letter, addreſſed to the Lord Biſhop of Sarum, Auguſt 9, (it ſhould have been Auguſt 7,) 1798, "the day of the Viſitation held at Chippenham, Wilts." The Letter is not long, being written on the ſpur of the moment, and conſiſts only of five pages. About ſixteen pages more are added, with an additional title, containing "Obſervations and Reflections, in Favour of Village Preaching."

As the ſame deſign pervades both the productions, it is of little importance to which of the two "the right hand of fellowſhip" ſhall be aſſigned. In giving the preference to Mr. Kingſbury, though his publication appeared the laſt,

laſt, may perhaps be conſidered as a proper compliment to his character and reſpectability.

Soon afterwards, a poetical *Jeu d'eſprit* was publiſhed, entitled "The Diſſenter Done Over." This may be conſidered as a parody on ſome parts of Mr. H. W.'s Letter. It poſſeſſes much humour, and as ſuch, perhaps, will be read with ſatisfaction.

Juſt as theſe pages were going to preſs, another treat of a ſtill higher nature was preſented to the public. This, as well as the preceding, is in rhyme. It purports to be "A True Account of the Deplorable Malady of H——y W——y, a Wiltſhire Clothier, &c. Being An Epiſtle from his Cook-maid, Doll Diſh-clout, to Mrs. Bacon, the Tallow-chandler's Wife, by P. P." The ſtyle is in imitation of the New Bath Guide, or of Peter Pindar, from whence probably the initial letters have been adopted. From the title-page we are fully acquainted with the deſign of the Writer; it may therefore be ſufficient to obſerve that the good-natured Reader will not be diſappointed in the peruſal of Mrs. Diſh-clout's Epiſtle.*

Scarcely

* To theſe might be added, the Critique on Mr. H. W.'s Letter,

Scarcely had this laſt MORÇEAU been ſerved up, before there was announced, "A Letter to W. Kingſbury, of Southampton, A.M. in Anſwer to his *Apology for Village Preachers, and his Animadverſions on a Part of the Appeal to the People*, by Brian Monckhouſe, of Oxford." Conſidering my deſign as partly anticipated, I patiently waited for its appearance; and the conſequence is, that ſeveral paſſages which I had commented upon have been ſuppreſſed, and a few others introduced that were originally paſſed over. The obſervations of this Author have ſuperſeded the neceſſity of the former; and the adoption of the latter has been with a view to render the Replies more perfect and complete. It merits a ſerious and deliberate peruſal. The friend of ſerious argument will therewith be highly gratified. A few of the ſame paſſages which he has noticed, are here introduced; but as they are produced for different purpoſes, and additional arguments againſt Village Preaching

ter, in the Anti-jacobin Magazine and Review for October, 1798, p. 409—415. Some anecdotes have been related reſpecting a *tete a tete* excurſion to Wilton, &c. &c.; but as theſe are foreign from the ſubject, and as his Letter does not immediately call for their introduction, I will draw a veil over them, by ſuppreſſing them.

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are deduced from them, the propriety of retaining them must be admitted.

Having ever been the humble advocate of our religious eſtabliſhment, without partaking of its honours or emoluments, I may claim the privilege of contending for truth, "in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon," from the pureſt principles of attachment. Hence it is, that I ſoon felt it to be a duty, not to ſuffer Mr. K.'s "Animadverſions" to paſs without notice, that it may not be too haſtily or too vainly concluded, that they are unanſwerable.

The ſcriptural quotations which he has given as his motto are, as uſual with moſt of the Diſſenters, groſsly mangled and garbled. The hiſtory of the firſt quotation is, that St. Paul, in the very act of a voluntary obedience to the law, was falſely charged with breaking it. To prove the propriety of application to himſelf and his colleagues, Mr. K. ſhould have proved in the firſt place, that they are manifeſting the like obedience, in beating up for recruits to the cauſe of Village Preaching. The whole of the context muſt convince the unprejudiced, that no two caſes could be more diſſimilar. The other paſſages have ſcarcely a ſemblance of reaſon;

ſon; which, if at all adopted, muſt be done without the ſmalleſt ſanction or authority.

That ignorance is the cauſe of the oppoſition to Village Preaching, as aſſerted in his Preface, is nearly akin to Mr. Clift's aſſertion, in his "Incidental Letter" before alluded to. We know who hath ſaid, that "there muſt be hereſies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifeſt." If the venerable Biſhop of Sarum, as we ſhall ſee hereafter, was treated by one of the Society with ſo little ceremony, the anonymous Author of the Appeal may diſregard the imputation of ignorance, even from Mr. K., without a bluſh. But, ſays this Apologiſt, he "frequently makes contempt and abuſe ſupply the place of argument;" from whence one might expect to meet with demonſtrations of the higheſt probability, if not of abſolute certainty. "The defeat of ſuch a champion," he adds, "would be no triumph." If this be a true repreſentation of the caſe, it is ſtrange that he ſhould run the riſque of a bloody noſe, or a whip through the gullet, without even a poſſibility of obtaining the deſired ſatiſfaction.*

* Perhaps he might think that his bodily weakneſs would protect him from the challenge, which honour might adopt to chaſtiſe or correct the tranſgreſſions of his mind.

But

But he is a friend to VITAL RELIGION. That is the cauſe he wiſhes to ſerve by this publication. It muſt, indeed, be confeſſed, that his excuſe for "redundancies, omiſſions," &c. &c. is ſomewhat curious. Candour is ſometimes ſolicited for an ungrammatical expreſſion, or other ſimilar overſight, occaſioned by an attention to the general argument. An author's ideas would amply ſupply him with theſe, though his pen ſhould ſometimes fail in deſcribing them; but an apology for ſuch a ſpecies of imperfection is ſo wholly unprecedented, that common ſenſe revolts againſt it. I deſiſt from purſuing this remark, ſince, he tells us, "it was drawn up in a ſtate of great bodily weakneſs." Yet it could not be very prudent to publiſh his Apology, under ſuch circumſtances, on ſuch a ſubject.

To come to the Apology. If the Author of the Appeal is to be condemned for what he has advanced at p. 32, of his pamphlet, all writers in defence of our religious eſtabliſhment will be virtually included. The arguments for a practice that muſt deſtroy all ſubordination, are pregnant with the evils there repreſented. If, under the pretence of propagating vital religion,

gion, the laws of ſociety are to be diſſolved, or even infringed *ad libitum*, the conſequences ſtated by the "Clergyman of the Dioceſe of Saliſbury," are hereby demonſtrated. How "cruel" ſoever the "Charge" may be deemed; if it be true, what can be thought of his pretended ſurpriſe in the next paſſage? To vindicate the fact, and to deny the conſequences, is not a new proceeding with perſons of their fraternity; but in this, as in other caſes, it is extremely fallacious. Does he mean to inſinuate, that men of limited capacity, ought not "to rely on their Miniſters" in matters exceeding their comprehenſion? He muſt have a keen ſcent, indeed, who can convert this into Popery. But he probably wiſhed to make an exception in their own favour. At any rate, it ſhould ſeem, that the Charge is not ſo very "weak and fooliſh" as he affects to make it. Equally mutilated is his quotation from p. 25, of the Appeal, as the firſt ſcriptural paſſage of his motto.

He next tells us, "the Miſſionary Society was formed in London in the year 1795." Mr. Clift talks of plans formed ever ſince 1793. We are then informed of "Heathens at home;" and reſpecting theſe, dormant conſideration, benign pity,

pity, benevolent endeavours privately exerted, an expanſion of the ſacred flame, followed rapidly in ſucceſſion. We are then told that "*Miniſters* went forth into places or ſituations where there was the leaſt inſtruction." But under a want of Miniſters, others are ſent to "read the Scripture, or ſome other good book." In a note he alſo tells us, that Burder's "Village Sermons" are compoſed for this very purpoſe. Some of theſe I have peruſed; wherein I found much of that enthuſiaſtic ſpirit, for which their preachings and writings are remarkable, but little of that ſober piety and ſubſtantial doctrine, that inculcates obedience to the laws and ſubordination in ſociety. How they can be "obedient to magiſtrates, and ſubmiſſive to all lawful authority" in their mode of conducting Village Preaching, is, as I have ſtated, utterly incomprehenſible.

The effects of this practice are next related. "Many ſouls," ſays he, "have been reſcued from ignorance and vice, many have become uſeful in ſociety, many have been brought to the knowledge of the truth, numbers have been drawn to unite in religious exerciſes," from their reſpective contrary extremes. I heartily wiſh

wiſh this were true; but one thing is obſervable, that bigotry and uncharitableneſs ſo completely engroſs the minds of ſuch converts, as to ſuperſede all charity and brotherly love. From their catalogue of Chriſtian graces and virtues, all perſons but thoſe of their own perſuaſion, are wholly excluded.

On acts of beneficence his obſervations are wholly irrelevant. Under the deluſive plea of *doing all the good we can*, the laws of civil ſociety are to be tranſgreſſed and violated. A formidable hoſt of enemies, though laying in ambuſh, may be diſcovered under this manœuvre. It would betray us into new ground, and open a fertile ſource of oppoſition, which has long been ſilenced by the firmneſs of parliament. Whether Mr. K. had any active part in the application for repealing the Teſt-act, I cannot aſſert. To this buſineſs, the Reader will perceive I am alluding. But if his arguments are at all valid at preſent, they would be equally ſo in that caſe. The efforts to counteract this pretended "cruel charge" of the Appellant are ſuch, that, if purſued to their conſequences, or traced back to their premiſes, they fully eſtabliſh and demonſtrate what they profeſs to con-

condemn. I am not diſpoſed to revive that controverſy; but the deſcendants of that elder branch of the family may be eaſily recognized.

His qualifying obſervation ſufficiently anſwers his parallel caſe in the medical world, in the next paragraph. "I mean not to plead any thing in favour of an uneducated irregular miniſtry, in ordinary caſes." It is only in caſes extraordinary, therefore, where "no ſuitable help is at hand, no ſkilful doctor is in the village," that he prefers a plea of privilege for ſuch intruſion. But they ſhould, firſt, be ſatisfied, that there is no ſuch aid, and ſecondly, demonſtrate their right to exerciſe this liberty. If he has a mind to reverſe the order, I ſhall not contend for the longeſt ſtraw.

Some very remarkable examples are then produced, reſpecting the MOTIVES of theſe itinerants. Candidates for orders in the eſtabliſhment, conform to the rules of their ſuperiors. So do thoſe who receive ordination among the Diſſenters. Theſe, in Mr. K.'s mode of reaſoning, are grounds for the itinerant to "undertake the ſpiritual good work." I fear this was written during a paroxyſm of his "alarming indiſpoſition." The parallel attempted between

tween the noted Howard and theſe ſelf-appointed and ſelf-created teachers ſo totally fails in its moſt eſſential parts, that the intellect muſt be weak or ſtrangely perverted which does perceive it. As little does it hold of the public benefactor, who ſupplies a town, heretofore deſtitute, with wholeſome water. The right to exerciſe ſuch office is carefully concealed from the view. If this had been firſt eſtabliſhed, his ſocratical argument reſpecting ſuſpicions of the ſincerity of their profeſſions, might have been the ſubject of conſideration. There is no law of civil ſociety which precludes me from feeding the poor, giving medicines, &c. if I have means and ability. Surely Mr. K. does not mean to intimate with Mr. Clift, that the rules which exclude unqualified or unworthy perſons from the miniſtry, are to be put on a footing with actions which are optional, and no where prohibited!

What other motives they may have, are nothing to the purpoſe. That GAIN is in ſome meaſure their object, is admitted by Mr. Clift. Whether theſe itinerants receive a ſalary, or an occaſional recompence, is immaterial. If the former is not ſtrictly the caſe, (for the Appel-

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lant does not ſay it is *annual,* the latter is admitted by his brother advocate for Village Preaching. How then can Mr. K. "pledge himſelf with the public, that it is entirely groundleſs?" To be thus contradicted by one of his own colleagues, is a little unlucky. Nay, he has even himſelf admitted, that "thoſe who are poorer, are allowed their expences, when they leave home." This is no ſmall incentive to ſuch a practice, though taken in the moſt qualified ſenſe, eſpecially when it is feeding the vanity of becoming a preacher. His confident aſſertion, that the Appellant's ſtatement of fifty preachers or more "iſſuing on the ſabbath from the city of Saliſbury alone," is unfounded, is no better than this Author's. Neither of them have told us poſitively their grounds; but if Mr. K. had known Saliſbury as well as the Appellant, he might perhaps have pauſed before he had ſo pointedly contradicted him.

As little has Mr. K. removed the impreſſion of his Opponent's arguments, on their political motives. After a feeble attempt at ridicule, he breaks out into a ſolemn exclamation, to induce his readers to believe that the Appellant's arguments are inefficient. The ſolemnity of the

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aſſertion demands attention. His righteous ſpirit, like Mr. Clift's, ſeems to be rouſed to energy. "If ſuch villains as he repreſents are to be found,—ſtrip them of their odious veil (nay, let him ſtrip them naked if he pleaſes,) expoſe them to the inſulting croud, and puniſh them with *his* ſtripes, and then they will ſmart indeed." How ſeverely they may ſmart under ſuch a diſcipline, I will not ſay. I have juſt removed the upper garment, and wiſh that he and his colleagues may ſpare us the trouble of any harſher uſage. He then has a daſh at private opinion, which is equally applicable to the eſpouſer of Village Preaching, as to the Appellant.

Some curious arguments next follow, on the connecting the increaſe of licenſed houſes,* with the number of weekly Preachers from Saliſbury. Some left-handed compliments on our venerable Dioceſan, ſimilar to Mr. W.'s,†

* As a proof of the neceſſity of exertion in parochial Miniſters, it is certain that at leaſt TWENTY new Meeting Houſes have been licenſed in the Dioceſe, in about THREE months, ſince the delivery of the Charge, in addition to thoſe FORTY which were alluded to by his Lordſhip.

† See a Letter to the Biſhop of Saliſbury, on his late Charge to the Clergy of his Dioceſe, by a Diſſenter.

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are next introduced to uſher in the important object of gaining an audience. With Mr. Clift, "it is moſt earneſtly wiſhed, that the Biſhop would admit into his preſence any one or more of" the diſſenting Miniſters, or Village Preachers, "to hear from their lips anſwers to any allegations their adverſaries may bring againſt them, or explanations of any part of their conduct." This, as is intimated, would give his Lordſhip "the opportunity of receiving *unadulterated intelligence*," as to their conduct and motives; concluding at once, that all his Lordſhip's viſitors are cheats and liars, and that he cannot confide in a word which they ſay.* But to let this paſs. Though I will not preſume to gueſs what reſpect they might ſhew to a Biſhop; it is well known that, if they meet with a parochial Clergyman, who may give them a hearing, the firſt argument conſiſts of ſome groundleſs aſſertion, the next is an inſult, and the third as certainly accuſes him with being an infidel. This, to be ſure is *great* encouragement for ſuch an interview.

* Does he wiſh to inſinuate, that his Lordſhip's powers of diſcrimination, are as weak or wicked, as thoſe of ſome other perſons on the State Trials at Maidſtone?

In this I am ſpeaking the language of expe-rience.

With the deſign of introducing "a very hard name," which, it ſeems, the Appellant, p. 39, has beſtowed upon them, Mr. K. pro-ceeds to deſcribe "the manner and circum-ſtances of Village Preaching." I diſpute not the facts which he has ſtated in their ſupport. Theſe are no part of the argument. The ten-dency of thoſe practices is the hinge of that Author's reaſonings, and this has been un-touched. When men attempt to juſtify pro-ceedings, inconſiſtent with the welfare of civil ſociety, and in defiance of the laws, we need not trouble ourſelves to follow them every where to learn their ſentiments. They may be partial and miſtaken; but that is no demonſtra-tion of truth or propriety. The aſſertion, that "the Church of England has not been attacked, nor her Miniſters, or their conduct, blamed" by ſuch preachers, is not true. The moſt illi-beral cenſures of pariſh Miniſters, it is well known, is the grand deſideratum in all their declamations. Perhaps he will ſet himſelf to reconcile this by his concluding exception, "ſo far as they have acted agreeably to the dig-

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nity and obligations of the ſacred function." In making themſelves judges, few of the pariſh Miniſters have a chance of eſcaping.

To blunt the edge of the Appellant's obſervations, p. 34, 35, he next expatiates on the cauſes of the civil war in the laſt century. On his return to modern times, it need only be obſerved, that their own increaſed activity, by themſelves and their emiſſaries, whoſe practices we are conſidering, is the ſole cauſe of the alarm he complains of. Daily experience fully corroborates what is ſaid at p. 35, and 38. When the wolf has got in at the window, it is too late to faſten the door. And if this aſſumed right, contrary to the laws, is permitted and connived at, I will not barely ſay, that the ſame principle, if purſued, would ſubvert REGAL and EPISCOPAL government only, but all other eſtabliſhed governments whatſoever.

How far ſuch aſſertions are either *libellous* or *falſe*, as he inſinuates, cannot, therefore, be ſo readily aſſented to. In extolling the loyalty of Diſſenters, and appealing to this teſtimony, "whether Diſſenters, *as ſuch*, have uniformly diſplayed their hoſtility to regal government," the ſame deluſive ſpirit is manifeſt. For if

Diſſenters, *as ſuch*, maintain and juſtify practices which are ſubverſive of order and the œconomy of ſociety, it will be difficult to exculpate them from the charge of the Appellant. If they are at preſent ſuch "real, hearty, and *diſintereſted* friends of the King," &c. I would only adviſe them not to patronize and perſiſt in practices which have a contrary tendency.* It is they who have raiſed the dæmon by their irregular conduct, and not the Appellant who has expoſed that conduct. "The religion of the Bible which we teach," ſays he, "inculcates ſubmiſſion, ſubordination, and obedience to HIGHER POWERS, in caſes not inconſiſtent with our obedience to God." It does ſo. But from the exception, it is obvious that they reſerve to themſelves a right and authority to exerciſe their judgment and conſcience in diſ-

* As Mr. Kingſbury has ſo pompouſly diſplayed the loyalty of Diſſenters (p. 27, 28.) and viſibly inculcated the practice of the ſame loyalty (p. 48.) I would only refer him to thoſe excellent "Letters of the Rev. David Rivers, late Preacher to a congregation of Diſſenters at Highgate," entitled, "Obſervations on the Political Conduct of the Proteſtant Diſſenters." My readers are earneſtly recommended to avail themſelves of this information..

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obeying their ſuperiors.* The obſervation of Gamaliel may be pleaded, but with little ground or foundation.

On the OBJECTIONS he has noted from Church people, my limits, not my inclination, prevent me from commenting. It is ſufficient to ſay, that his reflections are of a miſcellaneous nature, partly right, and partly wrong. His accidental information of the uncertainty of pariſh Church ſervice in villages proceeds, I apprehend, from a polluted fountain. His obſervations on the cauſes which induce "the religious *farmer* and his wife, the village BLACKSMITH AND COBLER," &c. to withdraw from their pariſh Miniſters, are too highly ſeaſoned to pleaſe a correct palate. But theſe *ſlighter* deviations from ſtrict matter of fact, *for the good of the cauſe*, are perhaps deemed trivial and unimportant; and theſe, with a little perſevering induſtry, and a ſpice of calumny, for

* How freely they have exerciſed that aſſumed right, is well known to many. I have been confidently informed, that thoſe who have more particularly attended to their preaching and practice, can produce an HUNDRED ſermons, ſtrongly tinctured with diſloyalty and diſſaffection to the government and conſtitution of this kingdom; and full of invectives againſt the Church of England and her Clergy.

which

which a ſpecious pretence is never wanting, will and do commonly complete the buſineſs.

We are told by Mr. K., that the "Village Teachers go, for the moſt part, into places where there are *no* pariſh Churches, or where the ſervices are *ſeldom* performed, or at *uncertain hours*, which the pariſhioners are not apprized of, or in the *moſt curſory* and haſty manner." But, it ſeems, this was not deemed ſtrong enough for his purpoſe; becauſe he ſubjoins in a note (p. 31.) that "it would be eaſy for the Writer to bring inſtances of each of theſe particulars. He can truly ſay he has not ſearched them out. They came accidentally to his knowledge." I fear there is a little unfairneſs, or deviation from ſtrict truth, in this account. But let that paſs. I would juſt venture to aſk Mr. K., if he is quite certain, that his informant was not prejudiced in his narrative, to warp, conceal, pervert, or tranſgreſs the bounds of truth? Was Mr. K. completely ſatisfied, that every reaſonable endeavour had been uſed by this meddling but ſecret accuſer, to attend the ſervice of the pariſh Church, and that the *uncertain hours* he alludes to prevented ſuch attendance? Did Mr. K. enquire, whether

ther this buſy informant or any of his family (if he has a family,) has lately been in the habit of frequenting the pariſh Church, ſo as to learn from week to week at what hour the ſervice is ſucceſſively announced for the enſuing Sunday, in caſes of accidental deviation from the ſtated times? Or, did he not rather greedily ſnap at and gorge the bait, like an hungry pike, without examining the concealed hook? I am inclined to think, that, inſtead of this orderly attention to his duty, it would be found on enquiry, that this zealous informant was employed in following theſe itinerants from village to village, when he ought to have been aſſembled with his neighbours at his own Church.

By a ſimilar mode of information, though probably with better claims to authenticity, the Writer has alſo accidentally underſtood, that this alluſion was meant for himſelf. It is well known, that Mr. K. has publickly declared this. But his inſinuation is as baſe as it is falſe. I may challenge him to name a caſe, wherein he can prove "for the moſt part," what he has calumniouſly intimated. In one ſolitary inſtance only can he poſſibly produce a

ſemblance

ſemblance of ſupport to his charge. The diſappointment of a horſe at the moment of ſetting out on the Sunday morning, compelled the Writer to trudge on foot ELEVEN miles to his firſt Church; from whence he procured one to croſs the common about THREE miles more to the pariſh Church in queſtion. If he really alludes to this, can it be deemed either generous or honeſt to aſſert it as an uſual practice of pariſh Miniſters? And even on this occaſion, a meſſage was ſent forward to the pariſhioners to ſtate the neceſſity of a later hour, with the cauſe of ſuch neceſſity. This was probably concealed from Mr. K., or perhaps he might be little deſirous of ſuch an exculpation. Do the friends of theſe Village Preachers never diſappoint THEM in like manner? Might not inſtances be produced, wherein theſe itinerants have failed in fulfilling their preaching engagements? When they bring forward accuſations of this deſcription, would it not be adviſable for them to conſider the ſolemnity of courts of juſtice, to ſpeak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" And it may not be improper to acquaint Mr. K., that the perſon he has thought fit thus wantonly to calumniate,

niate, can appeal to the pariſhioners themſelves, for the higheſt teſtimony to his abilities in diſcharging every part of his duty. In that reſpect at leaſt, though an humble Curate, he can boldly aver that he ranks as high in the public eſtimation as Mr. Kingſbury himſelf. Indeed, ſuch a conduct certainly merits a ſeverer caſtigation.

In his turn the Author might venture to relate things which have come "accidentally to his knowledge," and at leaſt may "truly ſay he has not ſearched them out." He might "bring inſtances" of Mr. K.'s confident aſſertions, that his "Apology for Village Preachers" is unanſwerable; with many other declarations of ſimilar import. He might prove, from people of his own ſentiments, to whom he has made thoſe declarations, that the Author was avowedly meant in this general cenſure. And to theſe he may alſo ſay, that at leaſt TWENTY-FIVE preaching itinerants have been reckoned up by name as reſidents in Saliſbury and its appendages; and from thence he may conclude it reaſonable to ſuppoſe, with the Author of the Appeal, that there are at leaſt as many ſubalterns, or attendant deacons, &c. which accompany

pany them in theſe excurſions. The number ſtated by that Author is, therefore, pretty fairly accounted for.—*Sed verbum ſat ſapienti.*

But DISSENTERS have alſo their objections. It ſeems, however, that Mr. K., "who has not been altogether inactive for five and thirty years, finds abundant cauſe for ſhame and ſelf-reprehenſion, for being ſo luke-warm in the cauſe of ſouls." He is NOW, at the *eleventh hour* of the day, become a convert to Village Preaching. There is no contending againſt new converts. Their paſſions are uſually too impetuous to be reſtrained by reaſon. Something like argument is attempted, in endeavouring to obviate the objections of the Diſſenters; but it is their buſineſs, and not mine, to notice the obſervations on this topic.

From the advice of the Appellant, p. 34, to be "circumſpect and vigilant," he has afterwards drawn a very unfair inference. He ſoon perceived, he ſays, that the Author's "intention was to excite them, not to *look at home*, but *abroad*;—not *into themſelves*, and *after their flocks*, but to ſcrutinize with a prying eye the dark deſigns of theſe inſidious men." Has the Logic of his diſtinguiſhed predeceſſor taught him,

him, that a man, by diſcharging one part of his duty, muſt neceſſarily tranſgreſs all his other obligations? This negative word NOT, which he has twice ſo emphatically introduced, is ſo groſs a perverſion of language, as the ſucceſſor of Dr. Watts ought ſurely to bluſh for. The fate of the paragraph is wholly decided by it. Indeed, the remaining pages of the pamphlet greatly depend upon it.

Biſhop Jewel, he tells us in a note, and the preſent Diſſenters are placed in ſimilar circumſtances. Both are loaded with invectives. Both are charged with diſaffection to government. But his quotations from that Prelate's Apology will not bear a compariſon. The parallel fails in its moſt eſſential parts. It fortunately happens that his works in folio occupy a corner in the little library of which the Author is poſſeſſed; and he has to complain, on behalf of his brethren, with equal unfairneſs here as on other occaſions.*

An affectation of modeſty and humility "with

* That the Readers may judge for themſelves, ſee Biſhop Jewel's Works, folio, edit. 1611, part i. p. 10, 14, 15, 18, 19—and again, part iv. p. 358; where they are preſented with M. Harding's Anſwers, and the Biſhop of Saliſbury's Replies.

regard

regard to the Clergy of the eſtabliſhment" is then annexed. His note on what the Appellant has obſerved on the "Holy Catholic Church" is as frivolous as it is unfounded. He has ventured upon the Socratic mode of argument with as little reaſon as it is poſſible to conceive a man of his reſpectability capable of falling into. I agree with him as to the propriety of exertion in the parochial Clergy; but at the ſame time would remind him, that Archbiſhop Secker's Charge, which he has quoted, had a ſpecial reference to the doctrines of Socinianiſm, and is not generally applicable to the Clergy. His concluſion, if taken *cum grano ſalis*, and with proper allowances in certain caſes, I am not very anxious to diſpute or contend about. Of having the laſt word I certainly ſhall not be ambitious.

I muſt now bid adieu to his pamphlet, by leaving it to its merited deſtiny. Civility to a brother, embarked in the ſame cauſe, requires that I ſhould afford HIM a portion of theſe pages. Mr. Clift's performance, already alluded to under the title of "An Incidental Letter," with "Obſervations and Reflections on Village Preaching," muſt now demand a ſuitable

able attention. From the title it is obvious, that the ſame deſign pervades both the productions; and that they may be deemed *par nobile fratrum*. But the leading features only can be noticed, after tendering my reſpects ſo largely to Mr. Kingſbury. If, however, I ſhould occaſionally indulge a little pleaſantry, after ſo ſerious a conſideration of the former pamphlet, I conſider the relaxation as ſtrictly allowable, with a view to prevent the overflow of a ſplenetic humour.

In the outſet we are completely puzzled to know his meaning, when he ſo ſtrangely expreſſes his happineſs on learning "the ſentiments of the neighbourhood reſpecting the late increaſe of Diſſenters." He tells us that "in general *he* heard with pleaſure, and was only pained to think a perſon of *his* Lordſhip's rank ſhould have ſuch very imperfect information, on a ſubject confeſſedly ſo very intereſting." It is fair to aſk, if he wiſhes to inſinuate that the Biſhop was really ignorant of the proceedings of modern Diſſenters? This ſcarcely ſeems probable, when he admits immediately that their "principles are ſo well known from *their* numerous publications." Suppoſing this for a moment,

moment, we muſt thence admit it is very *civil* and *condeſcending* in theſe two gentlemen to remove the denſe clouds of ignorance which obſcure the eyes of the parochial Clergy of their reſpective neighbourhoods.

It ſeems to be aſſerted, that Diſſenters or Village Preachers have never "interfered wherever a Miniſter has been found" who concientiouſly diſcharges his duty. This I ſuppoſe to be his meaning, though in vain do we look to the relative appellation of "SUCH a Miniſter" for a tantamount antecedent expreſſion. But in this they ſeem to make themſelves judges of the doctrines, as well as the conduct of thoſe Miniſters. The RIGHT of eſtabliſhing ſuch a tribunal is never once thought of. Self-conſtituted and ſelf-authoriſed, implicit obedience to all their mandates is required. Yet ſurely it would be adviſable to *ſweep before their own door* before they attempt again to *bruſh their neighbours' premiſes*.

But he tells us, as if to blunt the edge of all objections, that "the perſons concerned in *their* plan are not all, or principally Diſſenters." For this we have HIS word. Mr. Kingſbury has nearly ſaid as much. In one thing, however,

ever, they differ; ſince the latter dates the commencement of the plan in 1795, but Mr. Clift in 1793, whoſe *modeſty* alſo is remarkably conſpicuous in contraſting his own five years knowledge of "every plan formed" with the obſervation and experience of his Lordſhip for a period of more than fifty years active ſervice.

In thinking he would have done better to deſcribe a Diſſenter by ſome ſpecific definition, than to have denied in the groſs what every day's obſervation affirms, I believe can be no injury. They charge us with calumny in accuſing them as Diſſenters, becauſe they ſubſcribe to our Articles and Liturgy. But if that were all, it might not perhaps be worth our labour to diſpute about. Yet they ſurely forget, wilfully or ignorantly, that ſomething more is required. As individuals, forming a common ſociety, it is equally requiſite that they ſhould unite their ſervices in the ſame common form, and practiſe it as Miniſters, if properly called and authoriſed thereunto. By rejecting a part of the eſtabliſhment, they are as much ſubject to the charge of being Diſſenters, as by denying the whole. A man who neglects or refuſes to acquieſce with the doc-

trine

trine of ONE Article only, is a Diſſenter. A man who avails himſelf of the liberty to decline THREE Articles and A HALF, is alſo a Diſſenter. And a man who ſubſcribes ALL the Articles, if he diſcards the uſe of the Liturgy, is alſo a Diſſenter. This particular might be farther extended; but it is certainly needleſs. A *word to the wiſe is enough*, and *many words will not fill a buſhel*.

He is afterwards pleaſed to repreſent the means by which their labours are accompliſhed. "We encourage the moſt ſenſible and pious of our members," ſays he, "to go among them, and furniſh them with either manuſcript, or printed ſermons to read." I ſincerely congratulate Mr. Clift and his co-adjutors on this improvement of knowledge; becauſe it is well known that many perſons have heretofore applied for licenſes to preach who could not ſubſcribe their names, and it is even doubtful if they could read correctly. But to the queſtion, *Quo jure?* By what commiſſion are theſe preachers appointed to delegate ſuch a power? *How ſhall they preach except they be ſent?* Or, where do they learn, that the primitive diſcipline of the Chriſtian Church obſerved any ſuch

ſuch conduct? This enquiry might be purſued if experience did not aſſure us, that *he who follows truth too near the heels, may* perchance *have ſome dirt kicked in his face.*

The expence, to which ſome alluſion was made by his Lordſhip, is next conſidered. On this topic he largely extols their rigid œconomy. "By forbearing to purchaſe a favourite book," ſays he, "we find we can hire a horſe to ride into two villages, and preach to a multitude of ſouls. But what additional expence is incurred, our more regular Churches willingly contribute to ſupply." If there needed any teſtimony to corroborate his Lordſhip's conjectures, this would pretty ſtrongly afford it. I wiſh the inferior Clergy could ſay, that rigid œconomy, in theſe times, did not compel many of their brethren to trudge on foot to two or three villages, to perform their parochial duties. But to the ſubject of a favourite book. It is generally underſtood, that books of any deſcription do not form a very conſiderable portion of the *bona notabilia* of a Methodiſt Preacher. Their knowledge is attained by eaſier means than thoſe of ſevere and intenſe ſtudy. To paſs through the vain and ſervile drudgery of the

copious library, is too degrading for theſe ſpiritual guides. Yet is this bugbear, it ſeems, leſs terrible, even to a Methodiſt, than in times paſt; and the more "pious members" of their communities, who have not yet attained to the higher endowments, are furniſhed "with either manuſcript, or printed ſermons to read." *Every dog has his day*; and he knows who hath ſaid, that "the faſhion of this world paſſeth away."

In endeavouring to demonſtrate the expediency of *Village Preaching*, Mr. Clift, as well as his coadjutor, leaves the right of interference with the provinces of others untouched. That was too tickliſh ground to ſtand upon. His awful deſcription of the ſtate of villages, diſplays his *modeſty* and *charity*. "In ſome caſes the Miniſter had rather the Church ſank down, than bear the fatigue of preaching a ſermon, or go to the expence of paying a Curate." Bluſh, Mr. Clift, if you have any ſenſe of honour, of decency, of truth remaining in that diſtempered breaſt. Whilſt I am barely repeating your expreſſions, I am almoſt compelled to bluſh for you. Inſtead of your infamous charge againſt a body of men, to whom the laws of ſociety demand

demand a reſpectful deference; why had you not, like a fearleſs combatant, expoſed thoſe ſcandalous perſons to the world? But, no; that would have been too confined a theme for your extraordinary talents. From the general cenſure, therefore, you leave your own people to infer as much calumny as they pleaſe, againſt their pariſh Miniſters. Perhaps you had in view the proverb which ſays,—*Throw a great deal of dirt, and ſome will ſtick.*

To the period or termination of this *Village Preaching*, he next alludes. They "cannot poſſibly have any motive to extend the continuance" of their plan "a moment beyond the time it ſhall ceaſe to be abſolutely neceſſary." This is a common-place aſſertion with all oppugners of eſtabliſhments. For of this, it ſeems, THEY muſt be "convinced;" without ſaying one word of the means of conviction. Where village pariſhes are ſerved by men of abilities, whether reſident, or not, he and his aſſociates well know the conſequence. But WE know, too, that theſe Village Preachers ſeldom deſiſt from their impoſitions on the people, until, by means uſed to counteract them, they are

abandoned to preach nearly to the walls. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ*, is thus readily anſwered.

His Lordſhip, laſtly, is directed to the Rev. J. A. of *Sarum*, for farther information. They "have no wiſh" he ſays, "to deprive *the people* of one temporal bleſſing." If the facts were correſpondent to ſuch a wiſh, the parochial Miniſters would certainly feel much pleaſure. Unfortunately we remember a Preacher, the initials of whoſe name at leaſt and place of reſidence exactly correſpond to this reference, of whom this may not ſo ſtrictly be demonſtrated. About fifteen years ago, a little more or leſs, *Village Preaching* was a frequent practice with the gentleman I am alluding to. In a village, not quite *fifty* miles weſtward from Sarum, a ſmall freehold cottage afforded him a place of aſſembly. Its occupier kept a little country retail ſhop, and lived in credit. A pig or two were annually maintained and fed, partly for domeſtic purpoſes, and partly for ſale to accommodate the poorer inhabitants. Theſe preachings continued for ſome time, until it was obſerved that the live pig or pigs had not been replaced. The bacon flitches on the rack alſo diminiſhed, and at length vaniſhed. The little

articles

articles of the village-ſhop were diſpoſed of, and the ſtock was not renewed. The cottage itſelf, in conſequence of this Village Preaching (for the occupier was the proprietor,) was firſt mortgaged, and afterwards brought to the hammer. The chine and the gammon had been preached away, and the good things of life could no longer be procured under the humble, but heretofore hoſpitable, roof. From that period, interference with the province of the regular Miniſter ceaſed "to be abſolutely neceſſary." His careleſſneſs was heard of no more. The ſpiritual food of this divine meſſenger was no longer diſpenſed; and the deluded fanatics were left leiſurely to recover their former ſenſes.

It ſhould not, however, be omitted, that, towards the concluſion of theſe preaching excurſions, this Rev. Mr. J. A. or another of the ſame name, deputed a perſon of the name of Mr. V——, to ſupply his occaſional and frequent abſence. This ſubaltern Preacher, after a great many efforts for their ſpiritual benefit, at laſt was urged thus pathetically to exclaim and lament the inconſiderate conduct of his audience: "So many times as I have viſited and preached to you, to reſcue your precious ſouls from

from Hell, and yet not one of you has ever bought of me a ſingle pair of ſtockings." When the cottage was ſold—*ſhocking to relate!* the purchaſer converted the pulpit (PROFANE MAN!) into a canopy or ſhelter for the entrance at the door, which, I am credibly informed, ſtill remains to this day. To this day, too, except in one or two fruitleſs attempts in 1797, the village has been free from theſe itinerant intruders.

The concluſion and Poſtſcript are employed in lamenting his Lordſhip's ignorance, and expreſſing a deſire, to afford him ſome information. We muſt certainly acknowledge the great readineſs of theſe people to inſtruct their fellow-creatures; and this Letter proves, that they are "no reſpecters of perſons." He ſeems to regret his obligation "to leave the town immediately, on one of thoſe preaching excurſions," as it prevents him from affording his "Lordſhip any verbal information on the ſubject." And it certainly was very uncivil to leave our venerable Dioceſan in ſuch deplorable ignorance! But his forgiving temper will overlook ſo *trifling* an indecorum. Before he had ſo ſuddenly turned upon his heel, he might, how-

however, have recollected, that *fair words butter no parſnips*; but we muſt not expect to *make a ſilken purſe of a ſow's ear*.

This conduct, too, appears to be tinctured with ingratitude. The inſtruction afforded by this Charge for the edification of his numerous hearers, in this preaching excurſion, is incalculable. The vaſt variety of topics it comprehended, ought to have excited a more favourable ſentiment. In good manners, to ſay the leaſt, he has certainly been deficient; but this perhaps is deemed of inferior moment. No good end, however, could be anſwered in acceding to his wiſh by printing the Charge, except as I have juſt ſtated; which ſurely, on his part, muſt be a very ſelfiſh motive. *Thoſe who cannot bite ſhould never ſhew their teeth.*

His "Obſervations and Reflections in Favour of Village Preaching" form the SECOND part. He tells us he was preſent at the delivery of the Charge, and ACTUALLY wrote, in ſubſtance at leaſt, the "Incidental Letter" to his Lordſhip. But his firſt aſſertion, in point of ſpeculation, is unfounded. It is not true, that "vulgar prejudice runs in favour of a Biſhop." The Clergy in general, and all other diſtinctions of ſociety, are

are treated, on the contrary, with a coarſe freedom and illiberality. His proof of the prejudice alluded to, is alſo extremely ſtrange. He talks of "a flame being blown by a Biſhop;" as if his Lordſhip muſt aſk the *wiſe*, the *pious*, the *intelligent* Mr. Clift, in what manner the epiſcopal duty ſhall be diſcharged. Muſt the Clergy, too, ſolicit a licence and authority from him or his co-adjutors, for permiſſion to do their duty? But theſe practices make their work "far more difficult than it would have been." Indeed! I ſuppoſe, then, the Clergy are to ceaſe from performing that duty, and quietly to ſuffer theſe inroads to be made on the peace of ſociety, and the decorum of eſtabliſhments. A *modeſt* expectation, no doubt! *He who makes a ſheep of himſelf, muſt expect to be devoured by wolves.*

Though I will not ſay, as he puts into our mouths, "that nothing good can be heard" out of the eſtabliſhed Church; common juſtice requires us to vindicate ourſelves and the religion we teach and profeſs. Cavils may be continually raiſed, and doctrines and opinions perverted. To meet them with fortitude is a branch of our duty. To prove their erroneouſneſs, or expoſe their futility, ſhould alſo be our endea-

endeavour. It would be good advice to ſuch reſtleſs minds, to beware of *raiſing more ſpirits than they can lay.*

But they " are neither to be intimidated, or even diſcouraged." This is the bold language he next employs. " Our ground is good, we are warring a good warfare, and, from the preſent ſtate of the combat, we anticipate a glorious outcry." What he means by the laſt words, I confeſs myſelf too blind or too ſtupid to diſcover. To me it appears a ſtrange dialect to be adopted by thoſe *lamb-like* ſouls, whoſe " ſole aim is to advance the kingdom of Chriſt, and to recover morality in the world." But of this more preſently. He then alludes to the caſe of Gamaliel, and therein manifeſts the ſame ſpirit, for which their preachings and writings are uſually diſtinguiſhed. In the *licentia affirmandi*, their quotations and references are ſeldom deficient. Whatever has an appearance of additional weight to their cauſe, they are little ſcrupulous of admitting. In this inſtance, the great hinge of the demonſtration is totally overlooked. The extraordinary judgment againſt Ananias and Sapphira, no ſooner denounced than executed, is entirely forgotten. The numerous

miracles

miracles related in ſubſtance in the ſame fifth chapter of the Acts, are wholly paſſed over. The means by which the Apoſtles were delivered from the common priſon, are not the moſt diſtantly noticed. And yet, after all theſe omiſſions, he has the aſſurance, confidently and impudently, to compare himſelf and his colleagues with theſe Apoſtles. Thus boldly has he adopted their language, and impiouſly, I had almoſt ſaid, obtruded his garbled Scripture and enthuſiaſtic rhapſody on our venerable Biſhop and the public, as the declared word of God. This is ſomewhat like *the fox preaching morality to the geeſe*.

In talking or writing about morality, we find that theſe people have ſhifted their ground. Heretofore their artillery was conſtantly levelled againſt Heathen morality. The maxims of an Epictetus, a Seneca, a Socrates, or any of the ancient philoſophers, were deemed anti-chriſtian and deviliſh. Now they boaſt with an air of triumph *(credat Judæus Apella)* "that as we ſucceed, immorality decreaſes, and morality prevails." He next audaciouſly declares, "no man ſhall ſtop *him* from this boaſting," aſſuming to himſelf, as before, the words of an Apoſtle.

Sic

Sic tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis. In ſaying that " his Lordſhip and his Clergy of the higher order are deſtitute of the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity," he only retails the ſame cant phraſe, which Puritans have bandied about for one hundred and fifty years back. The effects of charity, as deſcribed by Saint Paul, can alſo be produced to ſerve his own purpoſe; but whenever they are inimical to the cauſe, they are ſedulouſly omitted. An inſtance of this has been given already. Thus, *one ſtory is good till another be told. Audiatur et altera pars.*

To paſs over ſome ſubſequent paragraphs, equally preſumptuous and arrogant, he comes to that part of the Biſhop's Charge, relative to the number of licenſed preaching-houſes within the laſt year, in the dioceſe of Sarum. " With as much ſerioufneſs," ſays he, " the Clergy are reminded of upwards of forty houſes being regiſtered for the purpoſe of religious worſhip, as though forty ſtandards had been erected for the ſubverſion of civil government." Does he mean then to impute to his Lordſhip, that ſerioufneſs is a crime? With reſpect to the good-will entertained by theſe Village Preachers for the civil and religious government of this kingdom, the

expe-

experience of the laſt century may ſuffice to demonſtrate, or the recent confuſions of the ſiſter kingdom. The ſame language, the ſame purity of pretenſions, the ſame profeſſions of honeſty and integrity, were THEN aſſerted, as NOW.* What HAS been, MAY again be. No, ſay our active opponents. We are not the ſame perſons as formerly. We act under the protection of the laws of Toleration. But whilſt the ſame doctrines are maintained, and the ſame practices purſued, common prudence obliges us to infer, that they are *ejuſdem ſpeciei*. Did not his Lordſhip ſay the ſame thing, but in far more elegant phraſe, Mr. Clift himſelf being judge? "With a faint hope expreſſed," ſays he, "THAT NONE BUT RELIGIOUS AND THE PUREST MOTIVES, INFLUENCE THE PERSONS CONCERNED, it was ſignified, THAT IT BECAME THE CLERGY TO BE AS MUCH UPON THEIR GUARD AGAINST THE PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES, AS AGAINST THE EXISTING EVIL." His cavalier interrogations, what this *exiſting evil* and the *probable conſequences* may be, he has

* Mr. Brian Monckhouſe, to whoſe Letter I have alluded, has largely diſcuſſed this part of the argument, and to him I beg to refer the Reader on this branch of the ſubject.

thought

thought proper to anſwer; but in language abounding with local or provincial phraſes, and totally unſupported by any authentic evidence. And though his language may dazzle and miſlead the leſs knowing, it certainly can never convince the intelligent. Even Sunday Schools cannot eſcape his cenſure. So groſs, wanton, and unprovoked, as far as appears by his pamphlet, are his attacks on theſe,* that he ſeems determined to build his own fabric on the ruins of his neighbour's. To this *weighty* performance, *great boaſt, ſmall roaſt,* would have been a ſuitable motto.

One part of his Lordſhip's Charge, as we have ſeen, is attributed to ignorance. He is next accuſed of miſapprehenſion; though, with an hypothetical caution, "if I rightly underſtood him." But if Mr. Clift had not been bewildered by prejudice, he might have perceived that Arians and Socinians were not con-

* Notwithſtanding the vauntings of Mr. Clift and Mr. Kingſbury, it does not appear that the patrons of Village Preaching are generally agreed in their plans. One of the people called Methodiſts, is at this very time, it ſeems, defending "The Lawfulneſs of Inſtructing Children in Writing and Arithmetic on the Lord's Day." A paper war, is now agitating, or was very lately, in the county of Cheſter on this ſubject.

founded with the " zealous promoters of Village Preaching. For another purpoſe were theſe names introduced.* Even thoſe of our predeceſſors, who " piouſly divided their time between the duties of the family and the retirement of the cloſet," cannot eſcape his cenſure; for they, it ſeems, were low and groveling ſouls, in compariſon with their more induſtrious ſons, the preſent ſupporters of theſe active plans of reformation. Soon after we are preſented with ſomething like a definition of a DISSENTER; in which he ſo nearly agrees with what has been advanced, that any farther obſervation is unneceſſary. For once we are happily agreed: *When we come to an end, things* may be expected *to mend.*

He does not forget to tell us, that Village Preaching commenced " with the Methodiſts, and by them principally is continued." I have no doubt that Weſley's Appeal on the ſubject of Field Preaching is familiar to him. It came into my hands above twenty years ago; but I confeſs it was impracticable for me to get

* Theſe were the paſſages, which, it is preſumed, principally provoked the " righteous ſoul" of Mr. H. W. to addreſs the Biſhop.

through

through it. He next acknowledges their wiſhes to creep into the Church; but inſinuates that in being refuſed admiſſion to the regular orders of the Miniſtry, they have been treated illiberally and unjuſtly. If " they knew their call to the *Chriſtian Miniſtry*," they have not been able to convince others of that call. The parallel between their caſe and that of the Apoſtles could never be eſtabliſhed. Nothing but a refuſal could conſiſtently be expected, if they were unqualified. And if they have been prohibited from becoming fellow-labourers, what ſanction can they have to exerciſe themſelves in loud reflections againſt the rulers of the Church? But " they could not be ſneered out of their conviction;" (ſurely his *righteous ſpirit* muſt have been grievouſly *vexed* when he had recourſe to this ſarcaſtic term,) " nor be kept back from preaching the Goſpel, by the refuſal of admiſſion into what is *generally eſteemed* HOLY ORDERS." For ſubmiſſion to " thoſe that have the rule over them," it muſt be admitted they have not been eminently ſignalized. And yet, with no ſmall degree of aſſurance, they can trumpet forth their own modeſty, and afterwards conſole themſelves by perſevering " in

their

their Miniſtry, as *Diſſenters.*" Surely they muſt have very pliant conſciences. In order to accompliſh the main object, all theſe leſſer matters are readily ſuperſeded. This affords a pretty ſtrong demonſtration of their diſpoſition, that *if the lion's ſkin will not cover them, the fox's ſhall.*

His next attack is on the regular Clergy, for declining their ſociety and friendſhip. But ſurely THEY muſt be allowed to judge how far ſuch acquaintance is prudent or adviſable. I have ſtated already, that they prove, for the moſt part, very troubleſome companions. It is an inſult on common ſenſe, therefore, to talk of their having " reaſon to complain." He then magiſterially talks of retaliation, which leads them " to preſerve diſtance," though, by the way, this is, in their caſe, only a paſſive circumſtance, and entitles them to little credit; and then " ſteadily to perſevere in the diſcharge of *their* miniſterial duties, in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon," without the ſmalleſt authority for doing ſo. Retaliation, when the offence lies at their own door, is a curious idea; a phantom of his own creation, conceived, cheriſhed, nurtured, and matured in the prolific fancy of his own

own diſtempered brain. What laws, human or divine, give them authority to preach "upon the horſe-block in a village," or contiguous to a gibbet in a foreſt? Are they ignorant, that theſe things are done in defiance of the legiſlative authority of the country?* What conſummate aſſurance, then, muſt it be, to talk of a "battery raiſed againſt *them* in the national Church, and the ſhot played upon them from the pulpit and the altar of the ſtately edifice, when the Clergy are convened to hear the Biſhop deliver his Charge!" But *the clerk forgets that ever he was ſexton.*

* A Preacher of this deſcription was lately fined Twenty Pounds in London, for perſiſting, in defiance of an admonition from the Magiſtrates, to preach in places which were not, and could not poſſibly be licenſed. He was afterwards alſo convicted of bigamy; and his defence before the Judge and Jury was one of the moſt conſummate and audacious ſpecimens of impudence, effrontery, and fanaticiſm, that has for many years diſgraced an Engliſh Court of Juſtice. He is now ſuffering the puniſhment of the offended laws of ſociety for this latter crime.—By the late ſedition act alſo, if more than forty-nine perſons are aſſembled together, whatever may be the pretended or oſtenſible motive, without being legally convened, according to the directions of that act, any one or more, or even all of them, are liable to be impriſoned in the common gaol, and to be tried at the public aſſizes of the county, on charges of ſedition againſt the government.

In anſwer to theſe imaginary injuries, he feels bold in referring to their "convocations, and the charges *they* deliver on ſuch occaſions." Of their right to hold ſuch meetings, in the way they are frequently done, there may be ſome cauſe to doubt. Miſrepreſentation, and unfounded declamation, mixed with glaring and impudent falſhoods, are then predominant.—However, it is not very uncommon for perſons of this deſcription, to *ſwallow an ox, and be choaked by the tail.*

Amongſt other diſtinguiſhed names, he then pretends to direct ſomebody to "Baxter, the non-conformiſt." Yet it would puzzle the moſt ſagacious critic to declare, whether he means the Biſhop of Sarum, or his Clergy. I would remind him of what his Lordſhip ſaid of Baxter: "A Baxter would bluſh for the doctrines and practices of modern Diſſenters," or ſome expreſſion not very diſſimilar, was the language of his Lordſhip. Can there be any longer a doubt of Mr. Clift's *modeſty?* Or, can we poſſibly miſtake the tendency of the reſt of the paragraph? How far alſo they are the "friends of order," is as little to be regarded. Their conduct is completely at variance with their lan-

language. A ſeries of crafty inſinuations, and calumnious cenſures of the regular Clergy, taken from the Weſleian School, which have again and again been expoſed and refuted, then ſucceeds. It may not be improper to adviſe our Author, *not to ſcald his lips with other folks' broth.*

His "child of a day," which, he tells us, "will fall into the hands of *his* brethren of different denominations, who are alike the ſubjects of his Lordſhip's reflections, and the objects continually laſhed by many of his Clergy," is next employed in exhorting to unanimity. He ſounds the trumpet and the war-whoop, to ſummon them to the common ſtandard. "The auſpices of Heaven," ſays he, "favour our undertaking, and the time is at hand when religion will make its way, without the rigid impoſitions that have long embaraſſed it in this iſle." That the ſubverſion of the eſtabliſhed Church is their principal object, is immediately to be inferred from this declaration. Artfully as their deſigns are veiled, the cloven-foot will ſometimes diſplay itſelf; and the vain-glorious ſpirit which directs their proceedings, is manifeſt from the high-ſeaſoned compliments conſtantly

ſtantly beſtowed on themſelves and their labours. "We have not the emolument of Abbey lands, &c. NOR DO WE NEED THEM," ſays he. But he has not aſſured us, that they do not wiſh for them; and if he had, I am not compelled to believe him. Their anxious deſire to get into the *national church*, as already noticed, is a full juſtification for withholding my aſſent. He forgets, too, that he has ſelected the very worſt poſſible example; for, generally ſpeaking, the Abbey lands have changed hands, and have long been the patrimony of the laity. Here, then, he has taken *much pains to little purpoſe*.

How their minds are devoted, we may fairly leave to themſelves and to God; but we pointedly deny, that their "lives *are ſo* exactly ſquared by the rules of his word," as Mr. C. wiſhes to inſinuate. That "God is not the author of confuſion, but of peace," is a doctrine which cannot be too ſtrongly or too often inculcated. Have they demonſtrated any extraordinary powers? No. Have they proved any right for infringing on the eſtabliſhed rules of the Church? No. The rational mind expects to be ſatisfied of theſe authorities, before it can allow

allow them to follow " the example" of him who " went about all the cities, and villages, preaching *the Goſpel of the kingdom.*" Enthuſiaſm may prompt him and his colleagues to obtrude themſelves upon the provinces of others. Ambition may lead them to " rejoice to have the honour to be engaged in this work." Chagrin and diſappointment at the *obſtinacy* or *blindneſs* of ſuperiors, in refuſing them admiſſion into the Chriſtian Miniſtry, may provoke them to vomit up their ſplenetic effuſions. I would juſt remind them, however, of the ſevere ſentence in the parable, againſt thoſe who had preached and even done many wonderful works in his name, but without his ſanction and authority,—" Verily, I ſay unto you, I know you not, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

I cannot wholly quit the ſubject of the preceding pages, without offering a few general Obſervations. The very great and extraordinary exertions now making by every ſpecies of Diſſenters, to procure proſelytes to their opinions, it is impoſſible for the moſt hardy and unbluſhing to gainſay. So numerous are the Preachers conſtantly iſſuing from the city of Saliſ-

Saliſbury, that the regular Clergy are every where meeting them on the roads, as they are riding or walking to their weekly duties in their reſpective pariſhes.

So many are the horſes wanted for the purpoſe of mounting theſe ſelf-created and ſelf-ſufficient preachers, that the regular Miniſters are frequently diſappointed, if they do not keep horſes of their own (which, in theſe times, very few of the Country Curates can afford); and it is no unuſual thing to ſee the latter trudging through mire and dirt, whilſt theſe Village Preachers ſally forth and canter along the roads, compelling all before them to make way. Who, indeed, are half ſo important as themſelves! Confined in the week to the ſhop-board or the lap-ſtone, or whatever may be their reſpective occupations, we behold them on the Sunday morning dreſſed out cap-a-pee, in pataloons, with ſhining boots, and glittering ſpurs, iſſuing from their retirements to diſpenſe THE WORD, in the villages to which they have been reſpectively appointed for the day. Does this afford no temptation to minds of ſuch a caſt, to become Preachers? Whoever he be that

that ſays to the contrary, I will plainly tell him that he is unworthy of belief.

There is much cauſe alſo to doubt their diſintereſtedneſs. The comfortable ſituation which Mr. K. and ſome others of the Diſſenters, who are the Miniſters of meeting houſes of long eſtabliſhed credit and reputation, ought not to be overlooked, when they are boaſting of their labours for the good of ſouls. For thoſe amongſt them who have had a liberal education, to patroniſe, ſupport, and encourage ſuch irregular proceedings, appears to a liberal and cultivated mind a moſt extraordinary circumſtance. We have heard of ſome, and we believe with good foundation, who wavered between the Church eſtabliſhment and the Diſſenters for a conſiderable time, until a favourable opportunity occurred for joining the latter, by an appointment to a lucrative ſituation. Then, and not till then, were they decidedly enliſted on the ſide of oppoſition to the regular Clergy.

On the other hand, I could name perſons of diſtinguiſhed talents and abilities in the Church, to whom overtures have been made of opening meeting-houſes amongſt the Diſſenters of a very lucrative nature. But againſt theſe ſuggeſtions,

tions, it is well known, their hearts have revolted. Though labouring under pecuniary embarraſſments, a circumſcribed income, ſometimes even depending on precarious employment as occaſional Curates, without preferment, and without proſpects, after more than TWENTY years ſervice in the Church; ſtill have they perſevered in a conſcientious communion with a ſociety, which, it muſt be confeſſed, had but ill requited them for their exertions in its ſervice. Can theſe advocates for Village Preaching diſcover no caſes of a ſimilar nature within the largely extended ſphere of their acquaintance? Or, are they ſo blinded by their own prejudices, or wilfully inattentive to the diſtreſſes of others, that ſuch viſible and ſtrong inſtances of hardſhips in the Church cannot meet their obſervation? We have already had occaſion to recommend the advice of *Audi alteram partem.* — It is no leſs neceſſary in this reſpect, than in the former caſe.

But theſe very pious ſouls, of whom we have been treating, are not conſtantly ſo attentive to the rules of propriety, either in morals or ſubordination to the laws of civil ſociety, as might be expected from their great zeal and extraordinary

dinary pretenſions to ſanctity and uprightneſs. The voice of Fame (a meddling jade, it is admitted?) has thought proper to trumpet a certain ſtory, reſpecting a contemplative viſit, at a late hour of night, to a gentleman's garden contiguous to this noted city of Saliſbury. Whether it was through the medium of theſe heavenly contemplations, that the terreſtrial and earthly things of this fertile ſpot had occaſionally and frequently vaniſhed from their ſtation, I cannot take upon me to ſay. But one thing is certain, that cabbages, and other things of that *trifling* nature, had often eloped from this incloſed ſpot of ground, without leave of the owner. This determined him to take ſome trouble to endeavour to diſcover, by what means theſe eſcapes occurred, or by whom the ravages were effected. Unfortunate reſolution! It was on a Saturday night, too, in a ſomewhat ſolitary ſituation on the eaſt ſide of the city, after the City Remembrancer had TEN times given the ſignal of Old Time to the ſurrounding inhabitants, that this reſolution was to be put in execution.

Prudence, in ſuch an uncertainty of the reſult, adviſed the propriety of taking a companion.

nion. Not long had they taken their ſtations before a footſtep was heard, and a third perſon quickly diſcovered in the act of ſurveying the garden. Unluckily a roſe attracted his attention, being in an early part of the ſpring, which he ventured to pluck. Whether they gave him time to proceed in his depredations, it is not ſaid. The ſignal for ſeizing the offender was given; and he ſoon found himſelf at the mercy of his offended neighbour.

Judge of the ſurpriſe of the owner of the garden, when he diſcovered that the culprit was one of the people, reſident in the city, diſtinguiſhed under the name of Village Preachers. The offender was not leſs ſurpriſed, when he found himſelf detected in the act of treſpaſſing on his neighbour's premiſes, and exerciſing liberties in which the civil law would afford him no protection. He could only have recourſe to thoſe humiliating meaſures, of which the conſcious guilt of his offence dictated the neceſſity. Of ſuch meaſures this *religious ſervant of* GOD immediately availed himſelf. No means of eſcape preſented themſelves to his fertile mind, now benumbed and torpid with ſurpriſe, but thoſe of ſubmiſſion and intreaty. Whatever

ſources

ſources of conſolation he might otherwiſe poſſeſs, nothing but a priſon for the corporeal frame of this doughty ſaint could be thought of or expected. One expedient alone occurred to him; and this was inſtantly adopted. Compaſſion, he ſuppoſed, for the welfare of others might interceed with his merciful judge. Though no walls or bolts could confine his righteous ſpirit, he was compelled to ſupplicate the perſon whom he had ſo groſsly offended, "with ſtrong crying and tears," for the inferior part of his nature. A reſpite only till the Monday was requeſted, before the offended laws of his country ſhould be put in execution. He would then ſubmit to whatever might be required of him, even to being incarcerated in a common gaol; that is, in plain Engliſh, he would conſent to being impriſoned on the Monday in the county priſon at Fiſherton, if he could only prevail, by any ſort of intreaties, to excite a remiſſion of puniſhment to that day. Can the Reader gueſs the very powerful motives of this *noted ſaint* for ſuch a deſire? I doubt if the cauſe will eaſily occur to him.—The truth, then, was, that one or two of the ſurrounding villages were to be viſited by him, as a Village Preacher,

Preacher, on the ſucceeding day, and it grieved him to think of the heavy diſappointment, of which an immediate impriſonment would be productive. *Poor ſouls!* they were hungering for the bread of life, which was to be diſpenſed to them on the Sunday by this very reſpectable Preacher of the Goſpel. The argument was forcible. Such an appeal could not fail to produce the moſt favourable ſentiments in the mind of every humane man. Such was the perſon offended. Every one knows him to be a man of the moſt amiable character for tenderneſs and compaſſion. Theſe paſſions operated moſt forcibly on this occaſion. Tho' no Methodiſt himſelf, he readily extended that charity to a FALLEN fellow-creature, which perhaps he would not have received from them. This man of encroachment, this man of treſpaſs, was permitted to depart, with a hope that he might not again tranſgreſs in a ſimilar manner; the villages received their portion of ſpiritual food on the following day, from his hallowed lips, and from ſuch a *pious* exertion of ſo wonderful a *ſaint*, there can be no doubt that *many ſouls were brought to* GOD.

The number of young and inexperienced boys, which

which are now training up amongſt them, to ſupport Village Preaching, is, to any one unacquainted with their practices, abſolutely inconceivable. Apprentices and youths of ſixteen or eighteen, and others of a ſimilar deſcription and character, are NOW actually performing the office of Preachers in the Meeting-houſes of this city. Let any one enquire, by what kind of perſons their aſſemblies have been edified on one or two Sundays paſt, particularly the laſt; and with aſtoniſhment it will be underſtood, that I have ſcarcely conveyed a ſufficient outline of the portrait. My limits will not permit me to complete the picture; and much leſs can I attempt to preſent my Readers with the full colouring. Enough, however, may from hence be deduced, to point out the purpoſes for which theſe diſorderly proceedings are encouraged; and to convince every well-wiſher to our happy eſtabliſhment in Church and State, how neceſſary it is to watch over the welfare of both with a jealous eye.

Thus have I demonſtrated the natural tendency of the preſent extraordinary exertions of the Diſſenters. Some notice has alſo been taken of their aſſumed right to hold ſocieties, and to

pro-

propagate their tenets by ſuch irregular methods. To enlarge on ſuch a ſubject, muſt be unneceſſary. It will be amply ſufficient generally to remark, that moſt of the obſervations produced in favour of their claims to exerciſe Village Preaching, in any way and manner they may deem adviſeable, have an equal tendency, if admitted, to juſtify the ſubverſion of the laws of civil government.—May we all be induced heartily to unite as one man, in defence of our eſtabliſhed religion and laws, and cordially to pray with our Church, " From all ſedition, privy conſpiracy, and rebellion; from all falſe doctrine, hereſy, and ſchiſm,

GOOD LORD, DELIVER US!"

BRITISH 17NO85 MUSEUM

Saliſbury, Nov. 13, 1798.